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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 008809

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: PM SINGH SHUFFLES PORTFOLIOS SLIGHTLY

Classified By: Political Counselor Geoff Pyatt, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (SBU) In an anti-climax, the GOI announced November 18 that it had reallocated Cabinet portfolios between the sitting Cabinet Ministers rather than expanding the Cabinet as expected. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh retained the External Affairs Ministry. Jaipal Reddy moved from Information and Broadcasting to Urban Development, where he may be helpful to our infrastructure investment thrust. Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi added I & B to his current Parliamentary Affairs Portfolio. The PM remains overwhelmed and dual-hatted. Political commentators were surprised that Sonia and the PM did not undertake radical surgery following the Natwar Singh scandal.

¶2. (U) The present composition of 62-member Union Council of Ministers, after the reshuffle:

CABINET MINISTERS (26)

Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister, is also in-charge of the following ministries/departments, currently not allocated to any other minister:

- Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions
- Planning
- Atomic Energy
- Space
- Coal
- Overseas Indian Affairs
- External Affairs

Shivraj Patil, Home Affairs

Pranab Mukherjee, Defense

¶1. P. Chidambaram, Finance

Arjun Singh, Human Resource Development

Sharad Pawar, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

Lalu Prasad, Railways

Ram Vilas Paswan, Chemicals & Fertilizers and Steel

Jaipal Reddy, Urban Development & Culture

¶1. K. Chandra Shekhar Rao, Labor & Employment

Mahavir Prasad, Small Scale Industries, Agro & Rural Industries

PR. Kyndiah, Tribal Affairs & Development of North Eastern Region

TR. Baalu, Shipping; Road Transport & Highways

Shankersinh Vaghela, Textiles

Natwar Singh, Minister without Portfolio

Kamal Nath, Commerce & Industry

H.R. Bhardwaj, Law & Justice

P.M. Sayeed, Power

Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, Rural Development

Priyaranjan Dashmuni, Information & Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs

Mani Shankar Aiyar, Petroleum & Natural Gas and Panchayati Raj

Mrs. Meira Kumar, Social Justice & Empowerment

Raja, Environment & Forests

Dayanidhi Maran, Communication & Information Technology

Dr. Anbumani Ramdoss, Health & Family Welfare

Sis Ram Ola, Mines

MINISTERS OF STATE WITH INDEPENDENT CHARGE (09)

Santosh Mohan Dev, Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises and Water Resources

Oscar Fernandes, Statistics & Program Implementation and Youth Affairs & Sports

Mrs. Renuka Choudhury, Tourism

Subodh Kant Sahay, Food Processing Industries

Kapil Sibal, Science & Technology and Ocean Development

Villas Muttemwar, Non-Conventional Energy Sources

Kumari Selja, Urban Employment & Poverty Alleviation

Praful Patel, Civil Aviation

Prem Chand Gupta, Company Affairs

MINISTERS OF STATE (27)

¶1. E. Ahamed, External Affairs

Suresh Pachauri, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions and Parliamentary Affairs

BK. Handique, Defense; Parliamentary Affairs

Mrs. Panabaka Lakshmi, Health & Family Welfare

Dr. Dasari Narayan Rao, Coal & Mines

Shaquel Ahmed, Communications & Information Technology

Rao Inderjit Singh, External Affairs
Naranbhai Rathwa, Railways; Chemicals & Fertilizers
KH Muniappa, Road Transport & Highways
MV Rajashekharan, Planning
Kantilal Bhuria, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution
Manik Rao Gavit, Home Affairs
Sri Prakash Jaiswal, Home Affairs
Prithviraj Chavan, Prime Minister,s Office
Taslimuddin, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
Mrs. Suryakanta Patil, Rural Development; Parliamentary Affairs
Md. Ali Ashraf Fatmi, Human Resource Development
1A. Narendra, Rural Development
1R. Velu, Railways
SS. Palanimanikkam, Finance
1S. Regupathy, Home Affairs
1K. Venkatapathy, Law & Justice
Mrs. Subbulakshmi Jegadeesan, Social Justice & Empowerment
EVK Elangovan, Commerce & Industry
Mrs. Kanti Singh, Human Resource Development
Namo Narayan Meena, Environment & Forests
Akhilesh Singh, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

Comment - Again Indecisive

13. (C) Political observers were surprised at this announcement, as most expected a Cabinet expansion that could include up to 15 new entrants, rather than a simple reshuffle of portfolios. In addition, PM Manmohan Singh was widely reported to be overwhelmed by his workload and eager to shed Foreign Affairs. Local scuttlebutt has it, that the PM was over-ruled by the Congress leadership, which was unwilling for now to fill what Natwar Singh still calls "his Ministry." Congress insider and Sonia Gandhi confidant Rashid Alvi told us that Congress still hopes to expand the Cabinet and bring in new faces after the Winter Session of Parliament ends on December 23. Singh's failure to press a Cabinet expansion is likely to be viewed by many as yet another sign of his government's relative "weakness," as Congress is confronted by myriad political problems (septel). This anticlimactic step is another sign of a party trying to cope with multiple challenges.

BLAKE